

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 7838

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO, SP

SUBJ: MFA VIEWS OF PORTUGUESE SITUATION

REF: MADRID 7605

1. MFA DIRECTOR FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, AT ONE POINT ACCOMPANIED BY SPANISH AMBASSADOR TO PORTUGAL POCH, REVIEWED CURRENT PORTUGUESE SITUATION AND STATUS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH EMBOFF NOV 5.

2. ALTHOUGH SPANISH EMBASSY WAS NOT FULLY STAFFED BOTH DIRECTOR AND POCH CLAIMED SPAIN REMAINED WELL INFORMED FROM OTHER SOURCES, INCLUDING FREQUENT SPANISH VISITORS. THEY LOOKED AT THE PRESENT AZEVEDO GOVT AND GROUP OF NIEN AS COMMITTED TO A FORM OF SOCIALISM WHICH IS NOT LIKELY TO MAKE FOR A COMFORTABLE NEIGHBOR. THE SITUATION IS SO CHAOTIC THAT AMBASSADOR POCH WOULD NOT RETURN FOR AT LEAST TEN DAYS OR MORE FOLLOWING THE SCHEDULED INDEPENDENCE OF ANGOLA NOV 11. THIS WOULD BE A CRITICAL PERIOD IN WHICH TO EVALUATE THE AZEVEDO GOVT'S ABILITY TO BRING ABOUT SOME MEASURE OF ORDER.

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3. BOTH SPAIN AND PORTUGAL HAD BEEN CAREFUL IN THE PAST

MONTH TO AVOID MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS. THE DIRECTOR POINTED OUT THAT FOLLOWING THE SACKING OF THE EMBASSY IN LISBON, THERE WERE ONLY TWO OFFICIAL STATEMENTS MADE, A GOS PROTEST AND A GOP STATEMENT PROMISING COMPLETE INDEMNIFICATION AND APOLOGIES. THEY DESCRIBED THE SACKING AS AN EXTREMELY UNPLEASANT AFFAIR. THE GOP HAD ISSUED ORDERS THAT THE SPANISH EMBASSY SHOULD BE PROTECTED. THESE ORDERS WERE DISCUSSED BY THE ENLISTED AND NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS OF THE UNIT RESPONSIBLE WHO DECIDED ON THEIR OWN NOT TO OBEY THEM. BY THE TIME HIGHER OFFICERS HAD LEARNED OF THIS SITUATION IT WAS TOO LATE. THE MFA BELIEVES THAT MILITARY DISCIPLINE HAS BROKEN DOWN EVEN MORE SINCE LATE SEPTEMBER AND THEREFORE SECURITY OF THEIR DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL IS NO MORE SURE TODAY.

4. AGRARIAN REFORM PROBLEMS. AMBASSADOR POCH DESCRIBED THE AGRARIAN REFORM AS ROBBERY, MOST LIKELY TO BE TAKEN OVER BY COMMUNIST-LED FORCES. THE LIVESTOCK WAS USUALLY SEIZED AND SOLD TO PROVIDE CASH FOR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. THE GOS ITSELF WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SO-CALLED REFORM IN THE ALENTAJÓ BECAUSE A NUMBER OF THE PORTUGUESE MILITANTS HAD COME OVER INTO THE NEIGHBORING AREA OF SPAIN - THE QUITE POOR EXTREMADURA -- TO STIR UP TROUBLE AMONG FARMERS.

5. DESPITE THE FRICTIONS, SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, AT LEAST ON THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL, ARE SEEKING TO RESOLVE DIFFERENCES AND TO CONTINUE AS MUCH BUSINESS AS POSSIBLE. THE REGULAR MEETINGS OF THE BORDER COMMISSION WILL BE RESUMED SHORTLY.
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